**Wheat Prices**

1218. SHRI B.K. HARIPRASAD: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's decision to import wheat after a gap of six years has failed to bring down the domestic market prices;

(b) whether the FCI stocks have plummeted to an all-time low of 15 lakh tonnes against the buffer norm of 40 lakh tonnes and whether Government expects to make up for the shortfall in buffer when rabi wheat crop arrives in March, 2006; and

(c) the reasons for huge variation in market prices for wheat between wheat producing areas (North) and Southern States like Karnataka and Kerala?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (DR. AKHILESH PRASAD SINGH): (a) Since the announcement of the decision on 1st February 2006, the price rise in both wholesale and retail prices has been arrested. Retail prices have also shown a downward trend in Delhi and other centres in North Zone. In msot other centres prices have remained steady.

(b) At the current level of offtake the estimated stocks of wheat in the central pool as on 1.4.2006 is likely to be about 20 lakh tonnes against the buffer norm of 40 lakh tonnes for 1st April. As per estimates given by the wheat procuring States procurement is estimated to be 162 lakh tonnes during Rabi marketing Season 2006-07.

(c) The prices of wheat in southern States generally remain higher mainly due to the high transportation cost.

**PDS Allocations**

1219. SHRI S.S. AHLUWALIA: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether volume of allocation of foodgrains and other items for distribution through Public Distribution System (PDS) reckons with number of ration card holders in the respective States;